THE CONCEPT OF SECULARISM IN EAST AND WEST

(The L. D. Swamikannu Pillai Lectures 1972—73)

(Delivered at the University Centenary Building, 20th—22nd August at 5-15 P. M.)

by

Fr. J. D'SOUZA

REPRINTED FROM *Journal of The Madras University*
Volume XLVI, No. 1 January 1974

TNSDA
08260

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
MADRAS-600 005.

First Published, 1974

© University of Madras, 1974

Price Re. 1-00

PRINTED IN INDIA
AT AVVAI ACHUKKOODAM, P. V. KOIL STREET, MADRAS-600013

2116

D'80U

[Library stamp in Tamil, 8260, 2.2.3.87]

THE L. D. SWAMIKANNU PILLAI LECTURES: 1972-73

(Delivered at the University Centenary Building, 20th—22nd August at 5.15 P. M.)

THE CONCEPT OF SECULARISM IN EAST AND WEST

Fr. J. D' SOUZA

I Lecture

Introductory Remarks. Secularism from the Earliest Times to the French Revolution.

Let me begin by thanking the Vice Chancellor and the Syndicate of the University for the honour they have done to me by inviting me to deliver the L. D. Swamikannu Pillai Lectures for the year 1972-73. The invitation was sent to me early in March this year. Since we were then almost at the end of the academic year 72-73, I requested permission to fulfil the assignment in the course of the first term of the present academic year, and I was kindly authorized to do so. My suggestion that the lectures might be given during these three days, 20th to 22nd August, was also approved. I am grateful to the Syndicate and the Registrar for their kindness in accommodating themselves to my wishes in this matter. With equal readiness they approved the subject proposed by me, "The Concept of Secularism in East and West", with special reference to the Secularism of the Constitution and Government of Independent India.

Before proceeding to the exposition of my subject, permit me to pay a tribute to the character and genius of the great man in whose honour these lectures were instituted. In doing so, I shall be conforming to a widely accepted custom followed by those placed in similar situations. I had the good fortune of seeing Dr. Swamikannu Pillai when I was a high school student in Mangalore, aged about 12 years. Mr. Swami-

kannu after graduating from St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirapalli, in the early eighties, had served as a College Lecturer for a year or two in St. Joseph's, and during that time had come to know an uncle of mine who subsequently attained distinction as a member of the Indian Civil Service, a Doctor of Law of Cambridge University, who retired from Government service as Judicial Commissioner in Sind. After that, for several years, he was a member of the old Legislative Assembly of Delhi, set up under the provisions of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. He passed away in 1953. Mr. Swamikannu having come to Mangalore on some engagement, took the trouble to come to my village home a little to the north of Mangalore, to meet the mother and other members of the family of the friend whom he esteemed and admired.

Later on, I read a tribut to Mr. Swamikannu by an able journalist in which he was referred to as "the Gladstone of India". Lord Salisbury had described Gladstone, his political adversary, as "a great Christian", and Lord Morley, the biographer of Gladstone, had accepted the tribute as a just and comprehensive summing of the personality of his hero. Like Gladstone Swamikannu Pillai was not only a great administrator and Parliamentarian, but also a scholar, a master of several Indian and foreign literatures, an outstanding Mathematician, and a devout Christian, deeply devoted to his Catholic faith.

Another incident in Swamikannu Pillai's life which I like to recall, was his visit in France to the birth place of a French Jesuit Father who had been his Professor and Spiritual Director in St. Jeseph's College,— Rev. Fr. A. Jean. It was not an easy journey, but he gave himself all this trouble because, as he told the priest who accompanied him, "he wished to see the "cradle" of the man who had formed the heart and mind of this humble Christian". The Jesuit Father to whom these words were said told me that when he heard them he was moved almost to tears.

You may perhaps be interested to know the circumstances which led to the choice of the subject. During one of my visits to the United States as a Delegate of the Government of India to the General Assembly of the United Nations, I was asked to speak about the position of the Minorities in general, and of the Christian Minority in particular,

in our Secular Democratic Republic. Unlike most Indian Delegates I did not come back to our country as soon as the U. N. Sessions ended, but spent a good deal of time, not less then three months, and once as much as 10 months, speaking about India, to fairly large, and always sympathetic, audiences,—her history, her religions, her political evolution, her Constitution and Government, and so forth. My friends in the USA and more specially my American Jesuit Colleagues in New York, organized these lecture tours in a way that gave me the chance of meeting and speaking to educated audiences all over the U.S.A. as well as in several cities in Canada. What struck them very strongly was the fact that our secular Government gave handsome grants—teaching grants and building grants—to private institutions established and conducted by groups who wanted to safeguard their religious and cultural heritage, provided they conformed to essential academic norms and admitted students of all castes and denominations.

At that time a fierce controversy was raging in the States regarding the right of the students of private institutions to free transport to school and back, like the students of "public" or Government Institutions. I believe that the ultimate decision was against such a concession to private schools as being contrary to the secularism of the State. I then realised that there were important differences between Secularism as understood in America and in India, and that it might be both useful and interesting to discuss the subject, and to bring out as clearly as possible the difference between the two concepts in order to increase mutual understanding between India and the West on so important a question. I felt that such knowledge would increase respect for India and that any serious effort in that line by Indians would be service rendered to our Country. Hence, when the University authorities offered me the L.D.S. Lectureship this year, it did not take me long to choose my subject.

The word "secular" is an extremely elastic term having a wide and varied significance, sometimes used in a favourable sense and at other times in a pejorative sense. The earliest use of it, in my own and, let me add, in the case of Christians generally, was in contradistinction to "regular": secular referred to parochial clergy, priests active in spiritual ministry among people in the world; and "regular" referred to monastic or mendicant Orders of monks and friars whose lives were "regulated" ("regula" means rule in Latin) by the Constitutions of

their respective organizations. Two motives dominated the minds of those who chose the monastic life: first, the impulse to withdraw from the "world" and all its dangerous allurements and vices in order to ensure their own personal salvation, and secondly to offer their prayers and penances, their entire "contemplative" life to Almighty God, on behalf of their brethren in the "world" who were faithless or deficient in their service of God, or, to use an expression widely used and understood among Christians, "in reparation for sinners". The entire idea is based on the doctrine of the brotherhood of all men, not only in so far as they are all created by God in his own image and share a common human nature, but even more as brothers of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, intimately united to Him as members of His "Mystical Body". A Christian is not merely a follower of Christ, a faithful imitator of His conduct and disposition, but one who shares His very nature by virtue of the special "graces" he receives through the Sacraments, beginning with Baptism.

It was St. Augustine, the greatest of the Christian thinkers in the earlier centuries of Christianity, who elaborated this idea of two distinct societies functioning among the members of the human race; the City of God, and the City of Man, the Spiritual and the Temporal, both existing side by side, and each with its own "end" or objecive, and its own organization and method of Government. The earlier tradition, both in East and West, was to combine the two functions in the person of the king. This was true to the Roman Emperors who even divinized themselves and demanded that their subjects should offer sacrifices to them as to gods. The refusal of the Christians to submit to this led to their persecution for over three centuries, till the conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine. In the East also, the concept of King and Priest united in one person, the Devaraja, was equally prevalent. The Chinese Emperor was called the Son of Heaven ; and in Japan the Emperor claimed Divine honours as recently as the II world war. However, in India the royal power was mitigated by the existence of a hereditary priestly class which did not claim political power. This, as much as other causes which we shall describe at greater length later on, explains the facility with which New India accepted without much difficulty the concept, and the subsequent establishment, of a secular Stated.

In the West, the development of the idea of the separation between Church and State was facilitated by the persecution of the Christians by the Roman Emperors who demanded from their subjects divine honours, symbolized by the burning of incense before them. Its doctrinal basis was the declaration of Christ: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's". The widespread licentiousness prevalent in the Roman Empire in the centuries of its decadence strengthened the desire to keep Church and State distinct and separate. We have seen that it was St. Augustine who gave to the Christian world the most luminous exposition of the concept of two Cities, the City of God and the City of Man. What he had first outlined in theory, and had helped to enforce in practice, was more thoroughly studied in all its implications by the great Scholastic philosophers with St. Thomas Aquinas at their head. The licentiousness of Roman Society in the period of its decadence led to the practical movement of withdrawal from that tainted Society. Benedict of Nurcia gave the signal of flight from the "world" to take refuge in the peace and piety of monastic life. St. Benedict was the Father of Western monasticism. Before him others had fled from the world but they lived not in communities but as individual hermits.

However, while the basic principle of the distinct and separate societies was recognized by all, their "peaceful co-existence"—to use a present-day expression, was beset by many difficulties. The Emperor Constantine the Great who gave peace and liberty to the Christain Church, claimed and exercised many prerogatives in matters of Church Government. The history of the Christian Church from Constantine to Charlemagne is filled with the events that marked the tension between the Papacy and the Empire. Gregory VII, and Innocent III are the greatest protagonists on the Papal side. A tragedy well known to all students of history, the murder of Becket in the Cathedral of Canterbury, is one of the best-known episodes of this struggle.

The Papacy as representing the spiritual power, by essence superior to the temporal power of the State, claimed and obtained first, a primacy of honour, and in course of time even political authority by which the Popes exercised the right to depose temporal sovereigns and release their subjects from allegiance to them. Boniface VIII, who belonged to the great Roman family of the Caetanis, in his *Bull*, "*Unam*

sanctam", enunciated the highest claim ever made by the Papacy over temporal sovereigns. But already the unity of Christendom under the aegis of the Papacy had begun to break up with the growth of the nation states and the formulation of the principle of national sovereignty. This was shown most forcefully by the brutal treatment given to Pope Boniface VIII by Phillip the Fair and his Minister Nogaret who subjected the Pope to physical violence. Even Dante who disliked Boniface VIII, speaks of this outrage as "Christ being crucified again in His Vicar."

The encroachment by the temporal power on the spiritual domain had begun much earlier than the 14th Century,—the epoch of Boniface the VIII. The Patriarchs of Constantinople and of Moscow, separated by Schism from the Roman Church, were exercizing their Ministry under the strict surveillance and directives of the Czars who had made themselves Heads of the Byzantine and Russian Churches. The Monarchs of England from Henry VIII to the present day became Heads of the Anglican Church. The Renaissance and Reformation coincided with the rise of the Nation States and their rulers became automatically the Heads of the National Protestant Churches. In this matter the admitted principle was : "Cuius Regio, illius et Religio"—the religion of the Ruler must be religion of his subjects. The right of the ruler to coerce his subjects to follow his own denomination was generally admitted; the doctrine of the primacy of the individual conscience in matters of religion was not fully developed, and the principle of religious tolerance was not universally admitted.

Along with monarchical autocracy there was another doctrine firmly held by Luther and Calvin and other Reformers, and to some extent by the Jansenistic groups among Catholics, which prevented the development of Secularism among the nations of the West. This was their attitude to Man in general, their conviction that the human race was wholly vitiated and reduced to total corruption and weakness as the result of the sin of Adam and Eve in Paradise. The Christian Theologians call this basic inclination to sin, this inability to perform any morally good action without the special grace of God as "original sin". This indispensable grace of God is granted by an arbitrary decision of the Creator who is declared to "predestine" the Elect without their doing any thing to deserve such a favour. In other

words they, or at least many of them, denied the freedom of the will of fallen man. They rejected the Epistle of St. James which teaches the doctrine of human freedom and "merit" freely acquired by man by his virtuous actions,—an Epistle accepted by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches as part of the divinely inspired Scripture, but "an Epistle of straw" as Luthur described it.

However, along with this pessimistic attitude towards human nature and the movement of royal autocracy and interference of the temporal power in spiritual matters, a parallel movement of Humanism, based on the cult of the natural man as exemplified in Greek and Latin literatures gained wide acceptance in Europe, particularly Western Europe. At the same time, and partly under the inspiration of the same Classical Literatures, there grew in the Western countries the spirit of anti-religious rationalism which characterized the cultural evolution of Europe during the 18th Century. Voltaire was the most powerful and the most persistent exponent of this scepticism. The possibility of miracles was denied. A Divine Revelation recorded in an inspired Scripture was declared to be an invention of priests who wished to rule and exploit the ignorance of the masses. The Jesuit Order which was the spearhead of the Catholic Revival after the Council of Trent in the 16th Century, was suppressed after a campaign of the most unscrupulous vilification, and brutal pressure on the Holy See by the atheistic Chancellors and Prime Ministers of the Bourbon Monarchies. Their thousands of students were left to the mercy of unbelieving teachers in the Government controlled Schools and Universities, and they swelled the ranks of the sectarian antireligious secularists. This disastrous trend culminated in the French Revolution. Its farreaching effects on almost every aspect of life in Europe and America must be studied in a separate lecture.

II Lecture

Secularism from the French Revolution to Modern Times

In the first lecture we made a rapid review of the relations between the Temporal and the Spiritual Powers, between the Church and the State, to use the expression widely accepted today. The earliest monarchs known to history combined in themselves the functions of ruler and priest; and often when the actual exercise of priestly functions, namely the performance of the ceremonies belonging to their religious cult was left entirely to the priests of that religion, they declared themselves Heads of that Religion and took considerable part in the administrative side of its activity. Even in the Catholic Church where total authority was vested in the Pope, the Emperors, following the example of Constantine the Great, and of Charlemagne, claimed a considerable share in Church administration, obtained sometimes by force and sometimes by amicable mutual agreement. However the higher status and authority of the Spiritual Power was generally admitted in all Catholic countries. A striking example of this, involving far-reaching consequences to the religious history of Europe, was the Bull of Pope Pius V in which he excommunicated Queen Elizabeth and released her Catholic subjects from allegiance to her. But in the interval, the rise of the national states and the sentiment of patriotic attachment to one's nation, had dealt a severe blow to the universal jurisdiction of the Church. This was made perfectly clear when a Catholic Admiral, Lord Howard, led the English Fleet against the Spanish Armada, whose aim was the restoration of the Catholic monarchy in England. From that time onward the separation of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities went on widening in almost all Western countries, preparing the way for the Secular State of today.

But before reaching the present trend, there were ups and downs, there were powerful movements in the opposite direction. The great Scholastic synthesis of all the knowledge accumulated till then—the

metaphysical, the physical, the sociological, and the theological,—if left to its inevitable evolution within the framework of a united Western Christendom, would have brought about the secularism of the State more smoothly and much earlier than it did take place. But the unity of Christendom was broken by the Reformation and by the permanent establishment of national Protestant States with Protestant rulers who claimed and exercised spiritual authority over their national Churches. Before the end of the 16th Century, to the Czars who exercized authority over the Orthodox Churches in Greece, in the Middle East, and in Russia, were added the Protestant rulers of England, of the Scandinavian States, and the German Protestant kingdoms of Central Europe. The movement to secularism was arrested. It was to be resumed in a more radical manner and in some cases with ruthless antireligious bias, and an aggressively atheistic policy from the French Revolution down to our own day.

It was the French Revolution which initiated the policy of separation of Church and State which characterizes the modern period. But it did so, and did succeed to a large extent, because of the ideological revolution without which the political revolution would not have taken place. There were several elements that coalesced to make up that intellectual atmosphere. There was first of all the growing realization of "the dignity and worth of the human person", a formula which expressed the basic motive of the free world's revolt against the totalitarianism of the Nazis, the Fascists, and the Marxists. The Humanism which the Renaissance had brought back to Europe developed side by side with the Manichaean pessimism of the Puritans and Jansenists. Christian theologiens were expounding the doctrine of the primacy of the individual conscience in moral conduct. A man is bound to follow the dictates of his conscience even though through no fault of his he believes sincerely in an erroneous doctrine. This doctrine was fatal to the theory of the royal prerogative of imposing the King's religion on his subjects even if they did not believe in it.

At the same time two of the greatest Christian thinkers of the 16th Century, Bellarmine and Suarez, while discussing the nature and origin of political power, put forward the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people long before Rousseau and the sceptical philosophers of the French Revolution made it the basis of their own political philosophy.

However there was a fundamental difference in the way that the two Schools understood it. They did not believe that political power came from the people by a social contract, that the rulers power was simply the totality of the individual personal rights surrendered by the people, and which they could withdraw at any time. The Christian philosophers taught that obedience to the just laws of the State was a moral obligation sanctioned by Nature and hence by God, the author of Nature. It was not merely a social expedient based upon a human consensus for promoting the common good. According to these thinkers, with Bellarmine at their head, disobedience to the just laws introduced and enforced by a duly constituted government is a sin or moral fault and not merely the contravention of a "penal injunction" which can be evaded without compromising the moral conscience. However, let me remark in passing, that with the emergence of the Welfare State whose objective is not merely to maintain "law and order" but to give the "good life" to all citizens, there is hardly any law in modern States which can be said to be a purely penal law.

Almost as improtant as the emerging doctrine of the sovereignty of the people in creating the ideological revolution and preparing the way to political revolutions, was the development of Humanism. The rediscovery of the Classical literatures of Greece and Rome had ended the medieval and launched the modern age in Eurpean history. The Church itself was the great agent in this humanistic movement and Christian thinkers adapted it to the demands of the Christian religion and created what has been called "Devout Humanism". The pessimistic attitude to man and the world,—vestage of the ancient heresy of Manichaeism,—gave way to a more optimistic attitude. Theologians learnt to discriminate between the "world" which Christ had condemned, the world of sin, the world of pride and sensuality", and the "world" as God's creation in which His perfections are reflected, the world in which man continues and completes God's creation by his own creative activity. This doctrinal development so profoundly in harmony with modern democracy found its latest and most authoritative expression in the great Pastoral Constitution of the II Vatican Council, "The Church and the World". It constitutes a reversal of the policy of Pope Pius IX and his condemnation of modern progress in the mid 19th Century in his "Syllabus of

8260

Errors". The materialistic and anti-religious bias of the so-called "Liberalism" of the 19th Century had given way to a genuine understanding of the spiritual idealism implicit in true Humanism. The widespread religious revival in Catholic countries during almost a century had thrown up, by the democratic process, political leaders of fervent religious faith. We have only to recall the names of men like Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schumann, Conrad Adenauer and J. F. Kennedy, and compare them with men like Pombal, Choiseul, Tanucci, and de Peneranda to realise how far-reaching was the change between then and now, and thus to understand the reasons for the Church's new attitude.

The progressive secularism of the modern State has been furthered by another important social phenomenon of our times: The rise of pluralistic societies in which men and women belonging to diverse racial and religious groups, live side by side in the same State, and are governed by the same laws. This has been caused first by massive movements of peoples resulting from the two great World Wars. It has also been promoted by religious tolerance of most modern states in which there is more or less complete freedom of the practice and preaching of religion. In a pluralistic State the democratic equality of all citizens before the law would be compromised if the State showed particular favour to a single religion. Hence if the government of such states is genuinely democratic, it has no option but to be a secular government.

On the other hand the religious activity of the citizens cannot but affect their civic rights and duties, and hence the Government has to take cognizance of them and ensure their being carried out without prejudice to its own authority. In Christian and Catholic countries, the Bishops and priests exercize not only religious jurisdiction but by their teaching and personal attitude, influence also the civic activity of their flocks. Government cannot but be interested in the way they administer their temples, mosques and churches. It has an obligation to see that the gifts and endowments they get are spent according to the conditions laid down by the donors, and, in any case, not in opposition to the laws of the country. This explains the passing of the Religious Endowment Bill, and the setting up of the R. E. Board in Tamilnad. Similar laws and procedures have been introduced in other States

also. Likewise in Catholic countries, relations between the Church and the State are regulated by agreements between the Government and the Holy See. These agreements are called Concordats having the force of a Treaty, and the implementing of them is watched over not only by the prelates of the church in that country, but also by an Ambassador of the Pope who is called a Nuncio. The signing of a Concordat and the presence of a Nuncio in the Capital does not necessarily change the secular character of the Government. India has an Ambassador accereditted to the Vatican, and there is a Papal Nuncio in New Delhi. Yet this does not constitute an obstacle to secularism. India claims to be and is recognized as being a secular State.

If I may be permited a digression here, I shall say a few words on a subject which always arouses passions on one side or the other when it comes under discussion—the Inquisition, and more particularly the Spanish Inquisition. There is no doubt that this is an example of intolerance which is not to the credit of the Catholic Church which accepted and profited by this method of religious coercion. But it is not always recognized that its violence was inspired not by religious fanaticism but by political ruthlessness. Old and well-established Catholic monarchies suspected the loyalty and patriotism of Protestants in so far as they did not accept what was regarded as the national religion. Protestant monarchs had the same attitude towards their Catholic subjects. The Church was asked to interrogate the man accused of heresy. When they found someone to be a convinced heretic, they passed sentenee and handed him over to be punished by the "secular arm". On several occasions the Holy See protested against the severity of such persecution of Protestants and Jews, and actually gave asylum to Jews in Rome or other towns in the Papal States. There have been Jewish communities in Rome who were allowed to build their Synagogues and follow their religion from the earliest times to this day.

Finally, a few words regarding the Catholic attitude to non-Christian civilizations when they became missionaries in Non Christian countries. In the earliest phase of missionary work after the Renaissance, the task of evangelizing non-Christians was entrusted to the zeal of the Catholic monarchs who had conquered those territories. Portugal, Spain, and later France, were the principal countries who

received this mandate. But when the Church saw that with the growth of modern nationalism, the Catholic countries were using missionary zeal to strengthen and widen their political power, when they imposed their own language and culture on the converts at the expense of the traditional culture and languages of even the people of ancient civilizations particularly in Asia, it opposed this policy in a decisive manner. Early in the 17th Century, the Church set up a "Congregation" that is, an agency similar to a Ministry in secular government, the "Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples", commonly known as the "Congregation of Propaganda Fide" to carry out missionary work. The missionaries sent out by this agency were instructed not to impose European names and customs but to adapt themselves to the culture of the local communities so far as they were consistent with Christian doctrines. The greatest protagonists of this system of "Adaptation" were Fr. Matteo Ricci in China, Fr. Vallignano in Japan, and Fr. Robert di Nobili in India. The missionaries in Portuguese and Spanish colonies continued the system of "europeanizing" their converts. But elsewhere the system was given up. The Christians who were converted by the missionaries sent out by Rome were not pulled out and isolated from their social ambience and continued to live with their Buddhist or Hindu kinsmen, culturally one with them though differing in their religion. That is the reason why Catholics in many part of India are completely Indian in culture, like the Catholics of Tamilnadu for example, who do not exteriorly differ much from their Hindu kinsmen, who generally live in proximity to them, and have free social intercourse including even intermarriage with them.

A word may be said about Indian converts to Islam. There the position was somewhat different. Muslims adopted the theocratic system of Government similar to that of the Jews, and in theory do not admit the principle of separation of Church and State. But this did not make them necessarily intolerant of other Faiths. They treated with respect all the religious based on a Book, that is, religions based on a Divine Revelation written down in a Book or Scripture. This was true of Jews and Christians, and in more recent times, many Muslim theologians consider Buddhists and Hindus also as Peoples with a Book. Whatever be the cruelties and asperities of Hindu-Muslim relations in many parts of India and many periods of our history, we

should not forget that under the Mughals, in the reigns of Akbar and Jehangir, India achieved an Indo-Saracenic synthesis in art and literature which is one of the purest glories of our three thousand years of history. The Muslims in the days of the supremacy of the Arabs were the leaders of European Culture. It was they who transmitted to Christian Europe the philosophy and literature of ancient Greece. They were a tolerant race who lived in amity with their Christian neighbours and subjects. The intolerance which is associated with the Muslims was practised by the Turks, and frequently it was inspired by economic rivalry rather than religious passion. Unless we know these noble aspects of Islamic history, national integration of Hindus and Muslims in India will not be easy to achieve. And such an integration is essential if India is to attain internal peace and harmony, and contribute her own share to the peace and cultural progress of the world.

III Lecture

The Secularism of the Indian Constitution and Government

In the two previous lectures I tried to follow the course of secularism in East and West from the earliest period when monarchs claimed and exercized both civil and religious authority in Europe and Asia: the Divinized Roman Emperors, the Emperors of China—"Sons of Heaven"—, the Devarajas of India, and in recent times the Emperors of Japan who received Divine worship and unlimited power till the second World War. In Europe the Augustinian doctrine of two perfect and independent "societies",—the spiritual and the temporal, Church and State,—if it had been left to its own natural development would have created the secular state more quickly than it did. But the process was slowed down, and to some extent arrested by the rise of the Nation States after the Renaisance, and by the Reformation which challenged and ended the universal jurisdiction of the Catholic Church. The rulers of the new Protestant Nation States became the Heads of their National Churches, just as the Czars became the Heads of the Greek Orthodox and Russian Churches. These regimes continued more or less undisturbed till the French Revolution. Its rationalistic ideology and the impulse it gave to political democracy put modern governments on the road to secularism.

The rapid increase of pluralistic states received a great impetus from the two World Wars, and the principle of the separation of Church and State was widely accepted even by Governments which were by no means anti-religious and whose subjects were sincere believers faithful to their religious practices. The most striking example of this at the present time is the U.S.A. Its leaders and people are to a large extent followers of one or other of the Christian denominations while officially the Government practises a strict and scrupulous secularism. Finally the older attitude of pessimism regarding human nature itself, the

belief in its total corruption, and in a psychological determinism which left no room for the freedom of the will, gave place to the optimism associated with the philosophy of Rousseau. It completed the ideological revolution which prepared the triumph of secularism in the countries of western Europe and America. In the Catholic Church the fullest expression of this changed attitude is found in one of the most important documents of Vatican II, the Pastoral Constitution, "The Church and the World".

It is well-known that the traditional Indian philosophy of life is "other worldly". The noblest spirits among Hindus and Buddhists preached and practised withdrawal from the world as the surest road to salvation. Action inspired by desire and aimed at securing some earthly good was sure to bring about rebirth, and untamed desires would lead to an endless cycle of birth and rebirth. To attain "moksha" or "Nirvana" one must acquire total detachment, and perform actions without desiring the fruit thereof. The highest spirituality was precisely to practise this type of action, "nishkama karma". However, we should not exaggerate the power of this doctrine, and conclude that it made Indians indifferent to family duties and civic progress. They accepted the obligation of fulfilling the duties of the position in which they were placed, and carried them out faithfully. Otherwise they would not have created a brilliant and long-continued Civilization, one of the most remarkable in the history of the world. Nevertheless, it remains true that in the standard of values accepted by India throughout her long history, holiness counted more than power and riches; the perfect man was the saint rather than the savant. And this remains broadly true even today in spite of the general acceptance by India of Western scientific, social and political ideals. India has entered the comity of nations as a great modernized State ruled by a democratic constitution and government.

This far-reaching change was the result of nearly two centuries of British Government, and the introduction of English education. From the earliest epochs of her history India had shown a great capacity to absorb and assimilate new ideas without losing her identity and fundamental outlook on life. Her genius for synthesis had enabled her to take up into her civilization contributions from Buddhism and

from Islam. The same genius manifested itself when she received, in the latest phase of her history, the impact of Western Civilization, and the knowledge of the Christian Scriptures disseminated by Christian Missionaries. Abuses which had crept into Hindu Society during the unsettled periods of her history were quickly suppressed. These movements of religious reform coincided with the growth of national sentiment. From this two—fold movement emerged New India. Mahatma Gandhi united in his own person these two strands in the texture of our national life, and so he has been rightly declared the Father of the Country, of New India, which like the fabled Phoenix has risen from the ashes of the old, once again youthful and dynamic, once again a powerful voice in the Councils of the world.

When the British established their power and became the effective rulers of the entire sub—continent, they prudently adopted a policy of neutrality in religious matters. Apart from the suppression of glaring abuses like Sati and child marriage, they granted full tolerance to the hundreds of religions and sects and castes and subcastes, prevalent in the Country. But this neutarality was not an unfriendly but a benevolent neutrality. It did not prevent the Government from giving indirect assistance to religious celebrations and demonstrations by maintaining order and ensuring peace in the temples and shrines when on certain occasions immense masses of devoteeds gathered together to fulfil their vows and participate in the ceremonies. Thus were laid the foundations of the secularism of the Government of India in the early years of British rule.

There was one significant episode in the history of religious tolerance under the British. Unwilling to wound in any way the religious succeptibities of the Hindus and Muslims of their vast territory, they at first forbade the entry of Christian missionaries form the West. But early in the 19th Century there was a remarkable religious revival among the Protestant denominations who were called Dissenters because they did not belong to the established Anglican Church. Under the influence of these Dissenters who were inspired by great moral fervour there was a powerful movement for the liberation of slaves, and the total suppression of slavery and the slave trade. The same religious fervour led to the growth of the missionary spirit among

the Protestants who till then had no missionary organizations for social and religious activity among the non Christian peoples of Asia, Africa, and Oceania. But from this time onward a vast Protestant missionary movement was initiated, and Protestant missionaries from every country of Europe and North America came to India and other countries not only to work among non Christians but even among Catholics whom they regarded as needing their Bible Christianity almost as much as the Non Christians.

This activity coincided with the growing demand for English education from the Indian middle classes. The British Government, unable to cope with the demand, requested missionaries and other private organizations to undertake educational work according to norms laid down by Government. They introduced the grant-in-aid system, and gave generous teaching and building grants to these organizations provided they admitted students without distinction of caste or creed, and did not impose Christian religious instruction against the wishes of the parents. This policy was dictated not only by the practical need of the moment but was also in harmony with the democratic principle of freedom of education, based on the right of the parents to choose for their minor children the kind of education they wanted. This momentous decision was of the highest significance in the social and cultural evolution of India, one of the most effective instruments in the creation of what we now agree to call New India.

Independent India took over this system from the British not merely for the practical reason that the vast network of schools and colleges run by private agencies could not possibly be taken over by the Government because it had neither the teaching personnel nor the financial resources needed for the task: there was also another motive deriving from political considerations. During the years of the struggle for independence, the Congress leaders had promised the Minorities that they would safeguard their rights, political and cultural, by reserving a number of seats to the Provincial and Central Legislatures consonant with the strength of their population. But after the division of the country and the attainment of independence, the leaders, knowing that such a reservation introduced by the British had led to divisiveness in the country culminating in the creation of Pakistan, were anxious to

find other means of guaranteeing the rights of the Minorities, The leaders of the Minorities in general were willing to give up the system provided their religious and cultural rights were enunciated in the Constitution among the Justiciable Fundamental Rights. This explains the comprehensive wording of the " right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion ". The unusual specification of the missionary right " to propagate " religion is explained by the background of discussions and negotiations which I have indicated above.

It may interest readers to note two incidents which occurred in the course of these discussions. A few Hindu Members of the C.A. from North India wanted to include a clause against cow slaughter among the Fundamental Rights. This was strongly opposed by other Hindus, including most of the members from South India, and the proposal was defeated. Another proposal was in favour of religious instruction in Government Schools and Colleges to all the students by teachers of their own Faith, in the school premises and preferably within the school hours. This too was opposed as tending to perpetuate divisions and as being opposed to national integration. The spectable of spveral teachers of religion, propounding doctrines and practices often contradictory and almost always capable of stirring up passion and partisanship, was rightly judged to be a serious obstacle to national unity. Hence there was general agreement that the experiment should not be tried. Similarly a proposal that even in denominational schools where the management provided religious instruction to students of their own religion, the other denominations also, if they were numerous enough, should be given instruction in their religion was rejected on the ground that it would wound the religious feelings of the management which had established the institution in the interests of their own culture and religion.

From the foregoing account of the events which led to the acceptance of secularism by the Constituent Assembly of India and the exposition of the principles on which it was based, it will be clear that it is not a sectarian and intolerant secularism but the expression of the character of the Indian people, the outcome of their historical evolution. Indian society is a pluralistic society. Indian culture is a composite culture. It is not a negative materialistic secularism but a

positive secularism sympathetic to the phenomenon of religion which has played a decisive part in India's history, and has inspired some of the highest achievements of Indian genius. It is therefore a concept peculiarly Indian both in its basic idea and in the delicate nuances with which it has been enunciated by the makers and leaders of New India. In a word it embodies India's genius for synthesis and is in total harmony with India's age old quest for unity in diversity.